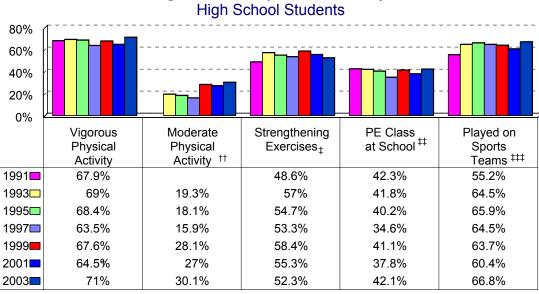
Physical Activity

Regular physical activity can increase life expectancy. Physical activity can also enhance mental health and self-esteem, of particular benefit to adolescents. The Youth Risk Behavior Survey includes questions on intensity, frequency, and duration of exercise; strength training; physical education class participation; sporting teams; television viewing; and injury due to exercise or sports. For purposes of this report regular physical activity is characterized as: vigorous -- 20 or more minutes of exercise that causes one to sweat or breathe hard on three or more of the previous seven days, moderate -- 30 or more minutes of exercise that does not cause one to sweat or breathe hard on five or more of the previous seven days, strengthening -- exercise to strengthen or tone muscles on three or more of the previous seven days.

Highlights

Figure 1 shows overall physical activity level by the Lancaster County teens. The prevalence of reported physical activity in 2003 increased from 2001. Seven out of every 10 teens reported vigorous physical activity in 2003.

Figure 1: Physical Activity*



physical activity that made you sweat and breathe hard for at least 20 minutes, on 3 or more of the previous 7 days

the physical activity that did not make you sweat or breathe hard, for at least 30 minutes, on 5 or more of the previous 7 days

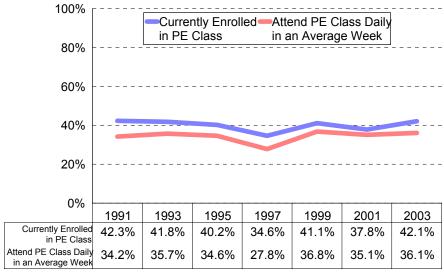
^{*} strenghened or toned muscles, on 3 or more of the previous 7 days

^{‡‡} have physical education class on 1 or more days in average week at school

played on 1 or more sports teams in the past 12 months, either run by school or community groups

In 2003, over one-third of respondents (42.2%) reported being currently enrolled in physical education class (at school), while 36.1% of respondents also reported attending their physical education class daily in an average week (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Physical Education Class (at School) **High School Students**



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*Grade Adjusted

*Grade Adjusted

Among teens who were enrolled in physical education classes at school, the great majority (85% in 2003) reported that they actually exercise or play sports more than 20 minutes during an average physical education class (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Exercise 21 or More Minutes In an Average PE Class* High School Students Currently Enrolled in School PE Class

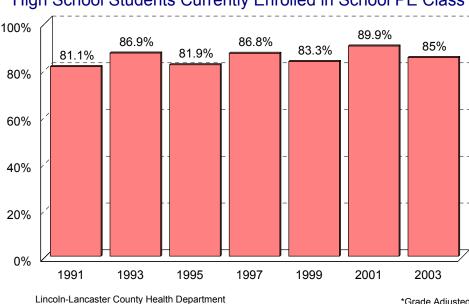
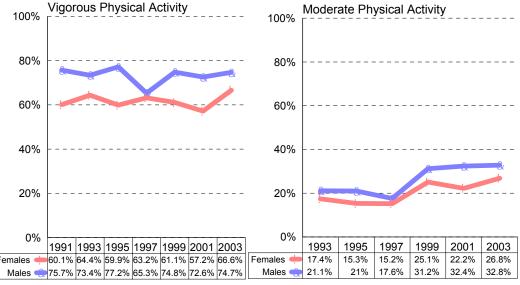


Figure 4 shows that male teens were more likely than female teens to report engaging in both vigorous (20 or more minutes of exercise that causes one to sweat or breath hard) or moderate physical activity(30 or more minutes of less physically stressful activity).

Figure 4: Physical Activity Level*
High School Students

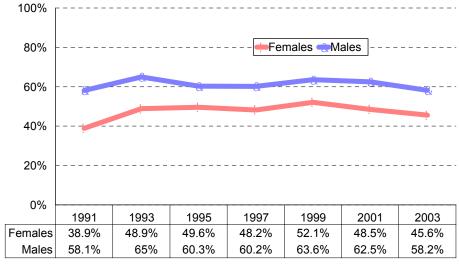


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*Grade Adjusted

Figure 5 shows that males (58.2%) were also more likely to engage in exercise to strengthen or tone their muscles than females (45.6%).

Figure 5: Exercised to Strengthen Muscles*
High School Students

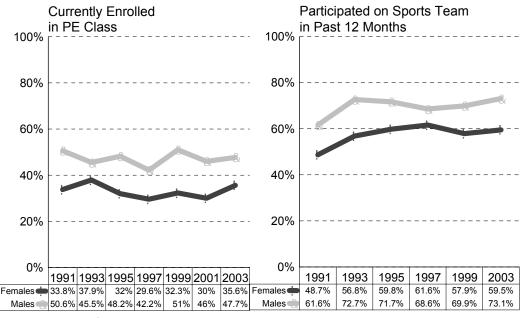


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*Grade Adjusted

Figure 6 revels that the rates of enrollment in physical education class and participation on a sports team (in the month preceding the survey) were persistently higher among male teens.

Figure 6: Physical Education Class and Sports Teams*
High School Students

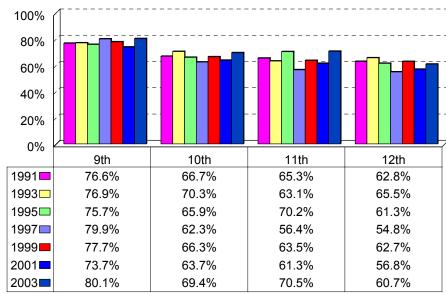


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*Grade Adjusted

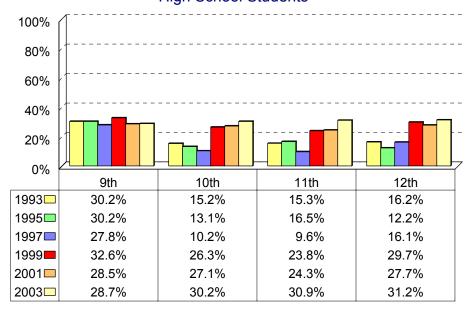
Figures 7, 8 and 9 show various physical activity by different grades.

Figure 7: Vigorous Physical Activity by Grade
High School Students



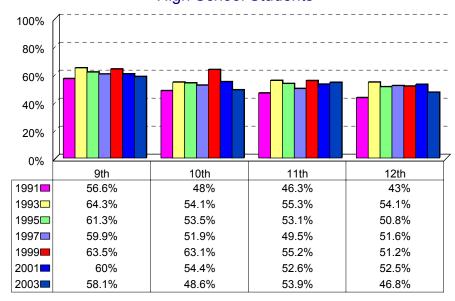
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Figure 8: Moderate Physical Activity by Grade
High School Students



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Figure 9: Strengthening Exercise by Grade
High School Students



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Public Health Comment: Physical Activity

-Mike Heyl

The scientific evidence continues to grow year after year regarding the positive correlation between physical activity and health outcomes. People who start a regular, moderately intense routine of physical activity in their youth and maintain it into adulthood are healthier, happier, and more productive individuals. Fortunately, Lancaster County has seen an increase in moderate physical activity among high school students with 30.1% reporting this in 2003, up from 19.3% in 1991. This is a good sign, but an effort to better maintain physical activity from 9th to 12th grade is a necessary step to sustain exercise into adulthood. In 2003, for the first time in a decade a higher percentage of 12th grade students reported moderate physical activity (31.2%) than 9th grade students (28.7%). Nevertheless, it should be apparent that 30 percent is much too low and more young people need to move into adulthood with routines already established rather than struggling to develop them after high school.

Families are key to increasing physical activity by modeling and supporting participation in physical activity programs and initiatives. Schools are essential to the effort by including quality, daily physical and health education, recess, and extracurricular activities to develop the knowledge, attitude, skills, behaviors, and confidence to adopt and maintain physically active lifestyles. A community structural environment that makes it easy and safe for young people to walk, ride bikes, and use close-to-home physical activity facilities is also essential.

In May 2003, the Governor's Council on Health Promotion and Physical Fitness released a document that outlined what can realistically be addressed by communities across the state to enhance efforts and promote a more active lifestyle for Nebraska's youth. Strategies regarding families, schools and communities were included with all of them designed to promote lifelong participation in enjoyable and safe physical activity.